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ABSTRACT

This project describes a program for increasing student retention and transfer of weekly spelling words across the curriculum. The targeted population consists of first, second, and third grade students in a middle class community located in the Northeast quadrant of Illinois. The problems of adequate transfer of previously taught spelling skills to the writing process will be documented through data collected from student writing, district writing assessments, and the sentence dictation portion of the grade level spelling tests. Analysis of probable cause data reveals that spelling instruction consists of drill and practice before the testing of a given word list. This type of instruction encourages students to memorize for the test, but not for authentic use in the future. Furthermore, teachers observe that students' misspellings prevent effective communication in their writing across the curriculum. A review of solution strategies suggested by knowledgeable others, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the selection of three major categories of intervention: create a personal and classroom spelling dictionary, establish grade level high frequency word lists, and mastery of spelling patterns and rules. Students showed a substantial increase in both retention and transfer. Students also displayed a positive change in their attitudes toward spelling. Appendixes contain a list of high frequency words, a students self-assessment checklist, and writing rubrics for first, second, and third grade. (Contains 23 references and 30 tables of data.) (Author/RS)

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December 2, 1999

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IMPROVING STUDENT TRANSFER OF SPELLING SKILLS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

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IMPROVING STUDENT TRANSFER OF SPELLING SKILLS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

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An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

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ABSTRACT

This project describes a program for increasing student retention and transfer of weekly spelling words across the curriculum. The targeted population consists of first, second, and third grade students in a middle class community located in the Northeast quadrant of Illinois. The problems of adequate transfer of previously taught spelling skills to the writing process will be documented through data collected from student writing, district writing assessments, and the sentence dictation portion of the grade level spelling tests.

Analysis of probable cause data reveals that spelling instruction consists of drill and practice before the testing of a given word list. This type of instruction encourages students to memorize for the test, but not for authentic use in the future. Furthermore, teachers observe that students' misspellings prevent effective communication in their writing across the curriculum.

A review of solution strategies suggested by knowledgeable others, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the selection of three major categories of intervention: create a personal and classroom spelling dictionary, establish grade level high frequency word lists, and mastery of spelling patterns and rules.

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CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

The chosen 1st through 3rd grade students of the targeted school show an inconsistency in adequate transfer of previously taught spelling skills to the writing process. This is indicated by student writing, district writing assessments, and the sentence dictation portion of the grade level spelling tests.

Immediate Problem Context

The targeted school has a student population of 414 students, which encompasses grades one through five. The racial-ethnic breakdown is 77.1% White, 14.0% Hispanic, 6.3% Asian, 2.7% Black, and no Native Americans. The school is comprised of 19.6% low-income students and 1.0% Limited-English Proficient students. The attendance rate is 95.8% with student mobility at 12.4%. There is no chronic truancy. The average class size is 22.

The total number of teachers at this site is 25. The gender breakdown is 98% female, and 2% male. One half of the faculty has a master's degree or above.

Built in 1955, this site is the oldest building in the school district and has recently undergone numerous improvements. These include new window, door, and ceiling replacements, and electrical rewiring to accommodate the state of the art technology for which the district is noted.

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A Beautification Committee comprised of parents, staff, and students enhanced the landscaping of the grounds surrounding the school. In addition to this, a grant was awarded to the fifth grade to build and maintain an outside Butterfly Garden in the center courtyard. Local high school art students have contributed decorative murals to grace the interior hallways and gymnasium.

The classrooms are self-contained. In addition to the computer lab, each classroom is equipped with a student learning station, which consists of two computers, a large screen television monitor, and printer. Each classroom has Internet access.

The basic curriculum is structured to include language arts, math, social studies, science, and conflict resolution. Special areas include art, music, physical education, library, and computer literacy.

Additional resources available to students are Learning Disability resource pullout programs, speech and language services, a reading improvement program, gifted education, and summer school targeted for at-risk students. For student enrichment, the school offers band, orchestra, and lunch time reading for pleasure activities. Positive behavior is rewarded by a before school open-gym free time and lunch time hands-on creative projects.

Evidence of community involvement included in the curriculum is the Drug Awareness Resistance Education Program, story time parents, high school cadet teaching program, and PTA sponsored writing contests. Senior citizens are invited annually to a musical performance. To encourage community participation and

awareness of the needs of others,a food and clothing drive is held every year.

The local school district is comprised of eight elementary schools and one junior high school. The district concentrates on a traditional curriculum including language arts, math, science, and social studies. Along with these basics the district also offers gifted education classes, and special education classes as well as music, art, and physical education. The average class size is 22 students.

The total enrollment for the district is 3,715. The racial ethnic breakdown is 64.4% White, 29.1% Hispanic, 5.2% Asian, 1.3% Black, and 0.1% Native American. The district includes 21.9% low-income students and 11.9% limited-English proficient students. The attendance rate is 95.6% with student mobility at 14.2%. Chronic truancy is 0.2%.

The total number of teachers employed in the district is 221. Of those, 93.7% are White, 5.9% are Hispanic, and 0.5% are Asian. There are no Native American or Black teachers. The gender breakdown is 89.6% female and 10.4% male. The average teaching experience is 15.2 years with 52.7% holding a bachelor's degree and 47.3% with a master's degree or above. The pupil-teacher ratio is 20.8:1 while the pupil-administrator ratio is 249.7:1.

The average teacher salary is $43,033 and administrator salary is $75,091. The operating expenditure is $5,751 per pupil.

The Surrounding Community

Founded in 1884, the targeted community located in the northeast quadrant of the state has become a prominent self-contained community. It is located 20 miles west of a major city and 12 miles away from a major airport. The village covers a land

area of 8.5 square miles. The elevation is 691 feet. Its location has access to major transportation routes. It is home to the fourth largest industrial park in the state, and has been referred to as a pro-business community.

The community recently settled a class action lawsuit that charged racial discrimination. Plaintiffs stated two tax increment financing districts forced low-income Hispanic residents to move. Now that the issue has been settled, the community is moving forward with its redevelopment plans. The village hired a public relations firm to improve its image.

This family oriented area offers a wide spectrum of home styles to meet a variety of incomes. The average estimated income is $60,362. The median age is 30. The current population is 33,580. The population consists of 88.2% White, 12.9% Hispanic, 5.9% Asian, 1.5% Black, and 0.1% American Indian. It has a population density of 3,822 persons per square mile.

There are 15 churches representing most major denominations. In addition, the community is home to three parochial elementary schools and a Catholic high school.

The state of the art library is a cultural focal point in the community. It caters to residents of all ages providing the latest in computer technology. The library contains approximately 90,000 books for public use. Numerous youth services to the community are also provided, such as summertime reading programs, preschool story hour, professional storytellers, and various motivational reading incentive activities.

The park district offers a variety of popular classes, organized sports programs, and an Olympic size swimming pool. It has 24 parks totaling more than 280 acres.

National Context of the Problem

The problem with students' ability in transferring spelling skills to the writing process has caused concern at the local and national levels. Hodges, (as cited in Husen & Postelthwaite, 1991) states the following:

> The issue of instruction in spelling is, in many ways, similar to grammar. Instruction appears to be most profitable when it is functional for students, when the transfer of learning from spelling lessons to real writing is made implicit, and when students can see how the study of the structures of the language can be applied to writing. (p. 5702)

It has been found that when children are instructed from a traditional spelling program, little transfer took place. There is evidence that a structured spelling program does not suit the needs of students who have not yet reached the transitional stage of spelling. An emphasis should be placed on instruction relevant to children's own writing. Without this foundation, there will be little transfer value (International Encyclopedia of Education, 1994).

There is evidence that students' writing performance across tasks has remained low and has not changed across time. This is attributed to factors such as students' instructional experience and home environment. Other findings have shown that the value students place on writing, its use in their own lives, and their engagement in their writing process activities remains quite limited (Applebee, 1990).

Home environment contributes greatly to the language experiences and development of children and, therefore, their

future ability to communicate effectively through writing. By age four, the average child in a welfare family may have 13 million fewer words of cumulative language experience than the average child in a working-class family (Publisher of Clinical Connection, 1995, p. 1).

Teachers have noted that students continue to misspell words in their everyday writing, although they spell the same words correctly on spelling tests. As indicated by Gill and Scharer (1996), spelling is a concern for teachers. The teachers "expressed discomfort about their current spelling instruction"(Gill and Scharer, 1996, p. 89). One teacher experimented with the practice of requiring her students to write each spelling word in a sentence using correct punctuation. After a short period of time, she discontinued the use of the assignment, observing that "it was too much torture"(Gill and Scharer, 1996, p.89). Most basal spelling programs consist of weekly word lists to be learned by the students, written exercises to help foster memorization, and a pretest and posttest. These activities are easy for teachers to plan and organize, but they encourage memorization and short-term learning. Teachers become frustrated when they observe students spelling words correctly during the spelling tests on Friday and misspelling the same words in their written stories on Monday (Gill and Scharer, 1996).

According to Scott (1994), instruction in spelling needs to be more meaningful for students. Children need to think of spelling as a tool to enable them to express themselves in writing. Buchanan's study (as cited in Scott, 1994) states the development of spelling skills should be taught with a meaningful purpose in mind as opposed to traditional, isolated word lists.

Encouraging students to spell words correctly is important. In his research, Wilde (as cited in Scott, 1994) shows our goal should be to have students spell accurately and independently in their own writing .

Almost all poor readers have spelling problems. Rebecca Felton, an assistant professor of neurology at Bowman Gray School of Medicine in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, (as cited by Beck, 1998) reports, "There is absolutely something different about the way their brains process language information" (p. 53). Measurable differences have been noted in the brains of deceased dyslexics.

In the past it was unusual to find misspellings in publications and lettered signs (Tietelbaum, 1991). Today it is common to find misspellings wherever one looks. Historically, the English language is a mixture of many languages and is hardly a phonetic language. Efforts by some to change the spelling of the language have been unsuccessful since people generally resist changes when imposed upon them. One solution to the confusing mess that the English language can be is to accept a variety of spellings of words. This solution, of course, would lead to chaos and would make communication very difficult. The first and foremost purpose in writing is to communicate effectively. "Anything that causes the reader to pause hinders that process. And misspellings do just that" (Tietelbaum, 1991, p. 354).

According to Tietelbaum (1991), the spelling errors that do not cause confusion or misunderstanding must still be corrected for one simple reason: appearance. We are all judged by appearance and our writing is sometimes an initial contact between

two people. Errors reflect the literacy of the writer. Although some errors are a result of poor proofreading, the reader still reacts immediately to the printed word.

Chapter 2

PROBLEM EVIDENCE AND PROBABLE CAUSE

Problem Evidence

The students in the targeted classrooms display spelling errors in their written work. The students were given a pretest of high frequency words in order to show evidence of this problem (Appendix A). The pretest consisted of twenty-five high frequency words developed for the primary grades. In order to assess students' feelings about their own spelling abilities, a student-centered, self-assessment checklist was administered (Appendix B). A teacher-centered ongoing checklist was used to record students' independent writing (Appendices C - E). It was used to record when a child had shown transfer of daily spelling practice into written language through authentic writing samples. Independent writing samples were collected periodically from each student.

The tables on the following pages show how students performed on the pretests of high frequency words arranged by grade level. The researchers developed the grade appropriate lists of high frequency words prior to the intervention.

Table 1-A
Pretest of High-Frequency Words
Grade Three
January, 1999

High-Frequency Words	Number of Correct Spellings	Number of Misspellings
are	21	0
because	19	2
been	7	14
could	17	4
first	17	4
from	20	1
have	21	0
know	18	3
many	16	5
our	18	3
people	16	5
said	17	4
their	12	9
there	18	3
they	18	3
use	19	2
very	18	3
were	14	7
what	18	3
when	20	1
where	12	9
which	15	6
who	16	5
would	17	4
your	18	3

Table 1-B
Pretest of High-Frequency Words
Grade Three
January, 1999

High-Frequency Words	Number of Correct Spellings	Number of Misspellings
are	21	0
because	19	2
been	9	12
could	18	3
first	18	3
from	20	1
have	21	0
know	20	1
many	15	6
our	15	6
people	15	6
said	15	6
their	10	10
there	17	4
they	13	8
use	18	3
very	17	4
were	18	3
what	20	1
when	19	2
where	15	6
which	10	11
who	16	5
would	15	6
your	19	2

Table 1-A and Table 1-B indicate that students as a class correctly spelled the high frequency words for that grade level when given in isolation. For both third grade classrooms, common difficulties with the words "been," "there," and "which" were observed. This could be attributed to confusion between the homophones "bin," and "been," "there," "their," and "they're;" and "which" and "witch."

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Table 1-C
Pretest of High-Frequency Words
Grade Two
January, 1999

High-Frequency Words	Number of Correct Spellings	Number of Misspellings
after	24	2
all	26	0
back	25	1
came	26	0
day	26	0
did	26	0
down	25	1
for	25	1
going	26	0
got	26	0
here	25	1
into	26	0
just	26	0
little	20	6
made	26	0
make	26	0
not	26	0
note	26	0
one	25	1
only	23	3
over	26	0
some	25	1
then	25	1
will	26	0
with	23	3

Table 1-C indicates that second grade students as a class were able to spell the high frequency words correctly for that grade level. This could be attributed to the concentration on formal spelling instruction beginning in first grade.

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Table 1-D
Pretest of High-Frequency Words
Grade One
January, 1999

High-Frequency Words	Number of Correct Spellings	Number of Misspellings
am	15	2
be	16	1
but	16	1
by	17	0
do	15	2
get	16	1
go	17	0
in	16	1
my	17	0
no	17	0
off	17	0
on	17	0
so	17	0
to	16	1
up	16	1
went	13	4
did	16	1
for	8	9
come	8	9
help	5	12
make	13	4
said	1	16
have	12	5
want	4	13
what	5	12

Table 1-E
Pretest of High-Frequency Words
Grade One
January, 1999

High-Frequency Words	Number of Correct Spellings	Number of Misspellings
am	7	13
be	20	0
but	16	4
by	14	6
do	16	4
get	13	7
go	20	0
in	20	0
my	18	2
no	19	1
off	15	5
on	18	2
so	18	2
to	14	6
up	17	3
went	9	11
did	18	2
for	18	2
come	13	7
help	9	11
make	15	5
said	10	10
have	15	5
want	5	15
what	3	17

Tables 1-D and 1-E indicate that students as a class were able to spell the high frequency words correctly for that grade level. The fact that first graders are in the beginning stages of reading might attribute to more difficulty with certain words such as "want" and "what" as well as the word "said."

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Tables 2-A through 2-E show the results of a student-centered, self-assessment checklist. They were administered in January 1999 and were a device that students used to assess how they felt about spelling. They provided the teacher with background knowledge of students' perceptions of their ability to spell.

Table 2-A
Student Centered Self-Assessment Checklist January, 1999
"Am I a Good Speller?"

STATEMENTS	A	S	N
I try unknown words.	10	11	0
I try to write the sounds I can hear in a word.	11	4	6
I think about what the words look like.	8	10	3
I try to use other words I know to help me spell words.	9	10	2
I use class lists, books, dictionaries to help me check my spelling.	5	13	3
I try my best when I write and I check my writing to be sure it's my best.	11	10	0
I know how to spell words I use often.	17	4	0
I am learning how to spell some other words I use in my writing.	12	9	0
I ask for help when I can't figure it out by myself.	4	15	2
I know how to use capital letters at the beginning of sentences and for names.	18	3	0
I read a lot.	10	10	1
I write a lot.	8	12	1
I am interested in words.	4	11	6

A = Always S = Sometimes N = Never

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Table 2-A showed that of the questions asked, 81% of the students responded always for the survey statement "I know how to spell words I use often." Additionally, 86% of students responded always for the survey statement "I know how to use capital letters at the beginning of sentences and for the names of people and places." Sixty-two percent of the students responded sometimes for the survey statement "I use class lists, books, and dictionaries to help me check my spelling." Also, 71% of the students responded sometimes for the survey statement "I ask for help when I can't figure it out by myself." Finally, 29% of the students responded never for the survey statements "I try to write sounds I can hear in a word," and "I am interested in words."

Table 2-B
Student Centered Self-Assessment Checklist January, 1999
"Am I a Good Speller?"

STATEMENTS	A	S	N
I try unknown words.	11	9	1
I try to write the sounds I can hear in a word.	16	3	2
I think about what the words look like.	10	9	2
I try to use other words I know to help me spell words.	6	10	5
I use class lists, books, dictionaries to help me check my spelling.	9	10	2
I try my best when I write and I check my writing to be sure it's my best.	11	10	0
I know how to spell words I use often.	11	10	0
I am learning how to spell some other words I use in my writing.	10	9	2
I ask for help when I can't figure it out by myself.	10	8	2
I know how to use capital letters at the beginning of sentences and for names.	13	8	0
I read a lot.	10	8	3
I write a lot.	8	13	0
I am interested in words.	6	9	6

A = Always S = Sometimes N = Never

Table 2-B showed that of the questions asked, 76% of the students responded always for the survey statement "I try to write the sounds I can hear in a word." Additionally, 62% of students responded always for the survey statement "I know how to use capital letters at the beginning of sentences and for the names of people and places." Sixty-two percent of the students responded sometimes for the survey statement "I write a lot." Finally, 29% of the students responded never for the survey statement "I am interested in words." Also, 24% of students responded never for the survey statement "I try to use other words I know to help me spell words."

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Table 2-C
Student Centered Self-Assessment Checklist January, 1999
"Am I a Good Speller?"

STATEMENTS	A	S	N
I try unknown words.	14	11	1
I try to write the sounds I can hear in a word.	11	11	4
I think about what the words look like.	7	15	4
I try to use other words I know to help me spell words.	10	9	7
I use class lists, books, dictionaries to help me check my spelling.	7	10	9
I try my best when I write and I check my writing to be sure it's my best.	15	8	3
I know how to spell words I use often.	14	7	5
I am learning how to spell some other words I use in my writing.	7	14	5
I ask for help when I can't figure it out by myself.	6	15	5
I know how to use capital letters at the beginning of sentences and for names.	22	1	3
I read a lot.	16	7	3
I write a lot.	16	8	2
I am interested in words.	7	11	8

A = Always S = Sometimes N = Never

Table 2-C showed that of the questions asked, 85% of the students responded always for the survey statement "I know how to use capital letters at the beginning of sentences and for the names of people and places." Additionally, 62% of the students responded always for the survey statement "I read and write a lot." Fifty-eight percent of the students responded sometimes for the survey statements "I think about what the words look like," and "I ask for help when I can't figure it out by myself." Finally, 35% of the students responded never for the survey statement "I use class lists, books, dictionaries to help me check my spelling." Also, 31% of students responded never for the survey statement "I am interested in words."

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Table 2-D
Student Centered Self-Assessment Checklist January, 1999
"Am I a Good Speller?"

STATEMENTS	A	S	N
I try unknown words.	15	4	0
I try to write the sounds I can hear in a word.	11	5	3
I think about what the words look like.	10	7	2
I try to use other words I know to help me spell words.	12	6	1
I use class lists, books, dictionaries to help me check my spelling.	4	13	2
I try my best when I write and I check my writing to be sure it's my best.	16	1	2
I know how to spell words I use often.	13	6	0
I am learning how to spell some other words I use in my writing.	12	5	2
I ask for help when I can't figure it out by myself.	18	0	1
I know how to use capital letters at the beginning of sentences and for names.	9	9	1
I read a lot.	9	9	1
I write a lot.	18	1	0
I am interested in words.	7	10	2

A = Always S = Sometimes N = Never

Table 2-D showed that of the questions asked, 100% of the students responded always for the survey statement "I know how to use capital letters at the beginning of sentences and for names of people and places." Additionally, 78% of students responded always for the survey statement "I try unknown words." Sixty-eight percent of the students responded sometimes for the survey statement "I use class lists, books, and dictionaries to help me check my spelling."

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Also, 58 percent of the students indicated that they sometimes asked for help when they couldn't figure out a word by themselves. Finally, 32 percent of the students marked the category "never" to show they asked for help when they couldn't figure words out by themselves. Of the 19 students, 16 percent were noted to show that the students never tried to write the sounds they heard in a word.

Table 2-E
Student Centered Self-Assessment Checklist January, 1999
"Am I a Good Speller?"

STATEMENTS	A	S	N
I try unknown words.	12	5	3
I try to write the sounds I can hear in a word.	13	5	2
I think about what the words look like.	12	7	1
I try to use other words I know to help me spell words.	15	5	0
I use class lists, books, dictionaries to help me check my spelling.	20	0	0
I try my best when I write and I check my writing to be sure it's my best.	12	7	1
I know how to spell words I use often.	12	5	3
I am learning how to spell some other words I use in my writing.	20	0	0
I ask for help when I can't figure it out by myself.	15	5	0
I know how to use capital letters at the beginning of sentences and for names.	8	12	0
I read a lot.	7	9	4
I write a lot.	8	7	4
I am interested in words.	20	0	0

A = Always S = Sometimes N = Never

Table 2-E showed that of the questions asked 100% of the students responded always for the survey statements "I use class lists, books, and dictionaries to help me check my spelling," and "I am learning how to spell some other words I use in my writing." Sixty percent of the students responded sometimes for the survey statement "I know how to use capital letters at the beginning of sentences and for names of people and places." Also, 45% of the students responded sometimes for the survey statement "I read a lot." Finally, 20% of the students responded never for the survey statements "I read a lot," and "I write a lot."

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Tables 3-A through 3-E are teacher generated checklists in the form of rubrics that measure student transfer of daily spelling practice into written language through authentic writing samples.

Table 3-A
Writing Sample Rubric January, 1999

	Always	Sometimes	Never
Indicates an awareness of "homophones"	38%	48%	14%
Can correctly add the following word endings to all words: y, ing, s, er, est, and ly	57%	29%	14%
Is acquiring skill in changing word forms from singular to plural by adding s, es, or by changing the y to i and adding es	52%	24%	24%
Is developing the ability to change word forms from present tense to past tense by adding d, ed, changing the y to i, and adding ed	71%	19%	10%
Can spell correctly the high frequency words as listed in Table 1-B	43%	43%	14%

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Table 3-A indicates that 43% of the third grade class can always spell correctly the high frequency words as listed in Table 1-A and 38% always had an awareness of "homophones". Fifty-seven percent correctly added the following word endings to all words: y, ing, s, er, est, and ly at all times. The writing sample also indicated that 52% of the students were always able to change word forms from singular to plural by adding s, es, changing the y to i, and adding es. The results indicated that 71% of the class always showed the ability to change word forms from present to past tense by adding d, ed, changing the y to i, and adding ed.

Table 3-B
Writing Sample Rubric January, 1999

	Always	Sometimes	Never
Indicates an awareness of "homophones"	19%	52%	29%
Can correctly add the following word endings to all words: y, ing, s, er, est, and ly	19%	52%	29%
Is acquiring skill in changing word forms from singular to plural by adding s, es, or by changing the y to i and adding es	19%	48%	33%
Is developing the ability to change word forms from present tense to past tense by adding d, ed, changing the y to i, and adding ed	19%	43%	38%
Can spell correctly the high frequency words as listed in Table 1-B	24%	33%	43%

Table 3-B indicates that 24% of the third grade class can always spell correctly the high frequency words as listed in Table 1-B. Of the 21 students represented by the writing sample 19% indicated that they always had an awareness of "homophones" and correctly added the following word endings to all words: y, ing, s, er, est, and ly at all times. Nineteen percent of the students

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were always able to change word forms from singular to plural by adding s, es, changing the y to i, and adding es, and showed the ability to change word forms from present tense to past tense by adding d, ed, changing the y to i, and adding ed.

Table 3-C
Writing Sample Rubric January, 1999

	Always	Sometimes	Never
Can add word endings of y, s, ing, ly, er, ed, and est	35%	46%	24%
Can discern long vowel sounds and use various spelling patterns for those sounds	35%	38%	27%
Indicates learning in the use of contractions	12%	65%	23%
Can spell correctly the grade level high-frequency words as listed in Table 1-C	46%	50%	4%

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Table 3-C indicates that only 46% of the second grade students were always able to spell the grade level high-frequency words correctly in a writing sample. In addition, 35% of second grade students were able to add word endings of y, s, ing, ly, er, ed and est all of the time. The same percentage of the class was always able to discern long vowel sounds and use various spelling patterns for those sounds. The class writing sample showed that only 12% of the students indicated learning in the use of contractions. These results suggest the need for improvement in the above areas.

Table 3-D
Writing Sample Rubric January, 1999

	Always	Sometimes	Never
Can write a one-syllable purely phonetic word correctly	70%	5%	25%
Can spell correctly a three or four letter phonetic word using short i, short o, and short a and consonants learned	60%	35%	5%
Can spell correctly the grade level high frequency words as listed in Table 1D	35%	50%	15%

Table 3-D indicates that 70% of the first grade students were always able to write a one-syllable purely phonetic word correctly in the writing sample. In addition, 60% of these first grade students were able to spell correctly a three or four letter phonetic word using short i, short o, and short a and consonants learned. Lastly, 35% of the students were able to spell correctly the grade level high frequency words.

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Table 3-E
Writing Sample Rubric January, 1999

	Always	Sometimes	Never
Can write a one-syllable purely phonetic word correctly	55%	35%	10%
Can spell correctly a three or four letter phonetic word using short i, short o, and short a and consonants learned	45%	50%	5%
Can spell correctly the grade level high frequency words as listed in Table 1E	35%	40%	25%

Table 3-E indicates that 55% of the first grade students were always able to write a one-syllable purely phonetic word correctly in the writing sample. In addition, 45% of these first grade students were able to spell corrrectly a three or four letter phonetic word using short i, short o, and short a and consonants learned. Lastly, 35% of the students were able to spell correctly the grade level high frequency words.

Probable Causes

Traditional spelling programs require students to memorize a weekly list of words selected by teachers or commercial publishers. The spelling program used has little relevance to the authentic writing. The activities associated with the word lists often do not improve students' real-world spelling ability. There is difficulty in rereading students' own writing if there is no consistency in spelling the words they used. As stated by Snowball, "The only authentic purpose for students to learn how to spell words conventionally is to assist others to read their writing" (1996, p.50).

When asked to write down their thoughts about "spelling" and "spelling instruction," a group of teachers responded with statements such as, "write words three times each," "memorization," "drill," and "word lists." These comments confirm that many teachers continue to believe that spelling is mostly memorization, drill and practice (Griffith & Leavell, 1995). This type of instruction encourages students to memorize for the test, but not for later use.

In the targeted school, formal spelling instruction begins at the first grade level. The current series, McDougal-Littell, used at the targeted school exposes students to weekly lists of 8 words in first grade, and 15 words in second and third grade. Many of these words are not high frequency words, and as a result, are less meaningful to students and are difficult to transfer to everyday writing. For many students the number of words is often overwhelming. Corresponding text activities do not support the transfer of words into effective written communication. For example, a worksheet that purposely presents misspelled words in a

passage of text provides little relevance to the students' authentic writing. When spelling instruction is not relevant to children's own writing, there is very little, if any, transfer value (Husen & Postlethwaite, 1994).

Correct spelling has always presented a problem for writers. Today, we can find misspellings in publications and professionally lettered signs. The English language is not logical or phonetic. It is a combination of many languages, primarily German, French and Latin. In recent years there has been an influx of words from the Greek, Hebrew, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Italian, and Russian languages. Because of these factors, it is obvious that "English orthography is such a totally confusing mess" as stated by Teitelbaum (1991).

Another reason for problems in communication is the misspelling of homophones, words that sound alike but are spelled differently and have different meanings. These errors cause the reader to pause and reread for clarification. If this happens too frequently, the reader stops reading the selection, which prevents the writer from getting the message across effectively.

As stated by Sitton (1998) educators once thought that invented spellings would not promote the formation of bad spelling habits. However, evidence began to arise that led these same educators to believe differently. The philosophy of invented spelling reduced the importance of spelling in the minds of teachers as well as students. The results showed there were major spelling deficiencies in writing (1998, p.92). The culprit is the philosophy that "any attention to spelling in writing is inappropriate and that spelling skills will naturally develop...later." When students begin to write, invented spelling

will be natural. However, these same invented spellings need to be phased out and replaced with conventional spelling as time goes on. If this does not happen, the misspellings may be reinforced and become increasingly hard to change (Sitton, 1998).

According to Hodges, (cited by Postelthwaite, 1994) the properties of orthography, a mode or system of spelling correctly, spelling usage, can cause problems for children when learning to spell. These properties include relationships among letters within words, the ways prefixes and suffixes are added to roots, and the ways words related in meaning remain related in spelling despite sound changes. Word memory plays an important role in spelling ability. More is known about the complex structure of our written code. Spelling ability also involves more than the memorization of individual words. It is a developmental process achieved through interaction over time with experiences with reading and writing. "Learning to spell, in short, involves learning about words over a long duration and in a variety of contexts" as stated by Hodges (cited by Husen & Postelthwaite, 1994). The ability to spell involves learning about written language through everyday use and the relationships of word components.

According to Gentry (1982), building on Read's research, children learn spelling developmentally through five stages. These stages are precommunicative, semiphonetic, phonetic, transitional, and correct.

During the precommunicative stage, the child takes symbols from the alphabet but indicates no knowledge of letter-sound correspondences. The child may not know the entire alphabet or be

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able to distinguish between upper and lowercase letters (Gentry, 1982, p. 41).

In the semiphonetic stage there is understanding of the letter-sound correspondence. During this stage, single letters are often used to represent words, sounds and syllables.

At the phonetic stage children are able to use a letter or group of letters to represent every speech sound they hear in a word. Even though their choices do not conform to conventional English spelling, the words are easily understood (Gentry, 1998).

Children at the transitional stage start to understand the correct visual representation of words and the basic understanding of the structure of words. This usually begins to occur within the first year of formal schooling (Gentry, 1998).

Finally, in the correct stage, the child is aware of spelling rules and strategies such as silent letters, irregular spellings, prefixes and suffixes, and alternative spellings. The child has a large number of learned words and is able to proofread for spelling errors (Gentry, 1998).

Children move from each of these stages to another gradually. Instruction in standard spelling helps the developmental process in many important ways. Research has shown that invented spelling does change after students are exposed to standard spelling instruction for several years. Children continue to modify their spelling knowledge based on accumulated information about letter-sound and word relationships (Gentry, 1998).

The science behind spelling problems is just as complex as the language itself. Researchers at Beth Israel Hospital in Boston have examined the brains of deceased dyslexics and found measurable differences that trace back to prenatal development.

Scientists are still a long way from understanding how the biology translates into reading disorders, and there is far less research on how spelling fits in (cited in Beck 1988, p. 53) "Almost all poor readers also have problems spelling, but the reverse is not true," says Rebecca Felton, an assistant professor of neurology at Bowman Gray School of Medicine in Winston-Salem, N.C. "There is absolutely something different about the way their brains process language information. But we don't know how hard-wired that is."

Correct spelling may be difficult because frequently a speller must use complex rules to encode into writing a familiar sound. The process of learning to spell is developmental as a student learns to use strategies that rely upon multiple sequential steps. The use of phonological rules plays an important role in spelling when students are recalling the correct letters and their corresponding sequences. When more difficult words are used for older spellers, linguistic irregularities are more frequent and students need additional strategies to determine accurate spelling (Wallace, Shorr, & Williams, 1995).

As stated above, there are many probable causes as to why students are unable to transfer spelling skills across the curriculum. These may include:

1. current spelling programs that do not require students to use spelling words outside the context of the spelling lesson
2. the complexity of English orthography which makes correct spelling difficult to learn
3. an overwhelming number of weekly spelling words presented

4. not enough instructional strategies for high-frequency words
5. spelling programs that put little emphasis on maintaining previously learned words
6. spelling programs that do not provide a large variety of strategies that could be used when learning to spell
7. teachers who have insufficient knowledge of developmental stages in spelling
8. corresponding text activities which do not support the transfer of spelling into effective written communication
9. the over reliance of invented spelling which becomes habituated

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Chapter 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

Research has shown that real-world spellers are successful because they are constantly expanding their word banks, improving their proofreading skills, and building their dictionary skills. Making spelling part of the writing process enables students to become real-world spellers. According to Schlagal and Schlagal (1992), some educators have viewed spelling instruction as superfluous, saying it occurs naturally through immersing students in the language through reading and writing. They feel that error works itself out over time. However, Schlagal and Schlagal have found that formal spelling instruction is important with effective and appropriate materials that fit the child developmentally. These are three strategies that are instrumental in assisting children in learning to become proficient spellers in their integrated writing across the curriculum, as suggested by Angeletti and Peterson (1993).

The first strategy is to provide a list of words most frequently used in reading and writing that is a useful and beneficial way of expanding the student word bank. Numerous studies have been made of spelling words most frequently used by students in functional writing situations. If frequently used words are identified for learners to master, spelling errors can

be greatly minimized in writing (Ediger, 1996). Mastering this functional, core spelling vocabulary is an efficient and worthwhile use of time. "If students are to communicate effectively in written expression, they need carefully planned, direct instruction to master the spelling of frequently misspelled words" (Allred, 1993, p. 26).

The second strategy is to have students acquire a knowledge of word patterns that affords them the ability to figure out proper spellings. Spelling pattern exceptions should be presented as well to students. Many researchers, including Allred (1993), have established similar guidelines for effective instruction which include the value of teaching a limited number of spelling rules, and the proper application of spelling generalizations.

Modeling proofreading skills is a third strategy to encourage students to self edit their own writing samples. Emphasizing dictionary skills in the classroom fosters students' independent assurity that each word is spelled correctly in their authentic writing. By implementing these strategies as suggested by Angeletti and Peterson, spelling is not seen as merely memorization but as a way to effectively communicate between reader and writer (1993, p.35).

Upon examination of children's spelling patterns and errors, teachers have involved the students in comparing and contrasting word features in both large and small group settings. As a result, teachers have begun to place less emphasis on activities that support one-time spelling memorization. Alternative strategies include wide writing on self-selected topics, peer editing, the use of multiple reference tools, and the development of final drafts with accurate spellings before publication (Gill &

Scharer, 1996). Purposeful writing activities can stimulate and enhance growth in spelling. Opportunities for frequent writing include the composition of messages, lists, letters, stories, songs, and poems. In addition to these frequent authentic writing activities, instructional games that involve exploring sound and letter relationships, manipulating letters to form words, building words, and alphabetizing, or using the dictionary are valuable tools to increase spelling competency. Spelling words can be selected from a variety of sources. One source for formal instruction could be obtained from students' own writing as well as a list of high frequency words according to grade level. By combining a variety of the above techniques with the foremost spelling instruction, teachers should be able to develop more effective spelling programs (Lutz, 1986).

Research completed by Angeletti and Peterson (1993) has also shown that the practice of having students master a basic list of 850 to 1000 spelling words during the elementary grades provides them with a spelling vocabulary of up to 89% of the words they commonly use in their writing. Use of a smaller, more basic list means that students begin their weekly word list with five or six meaningful, high frequency words. Students and teachers also have the opportunity to select their own spelling words to complete the list. These "selected" words come from meaningful experiences in school, students' own writing and reading, and their everyday lives. This way students can become responsible for their own spelling development in a number of ways. Students can then learn to use goal setting, self assessment, and self-editing in relation to their personal spelling.

Student created personal spelling dictionaries would be made up of those words generated from the students' own writing, along with weekly spelling words. Writing word definitions is not necessary since the focus is on authentic use of the words in their written work (Angeletti & Peterson, 1993). When editing, students circle questionable words and check the spellings in their own dictionaries. Scott (1994) felt that the personal spelling dictionary encourages students to be risk takers as spelling develops gradually through trial and error. Students can frequently refer to this word bank when writing.

Authors Scheuermann, Jacobs, McCall, and Knies (1994) listed the basic steps for using the personal spelling dictionary:

1. The first time the student encounters a word he does not know how to spell he needs to get the correct spelling from the teacher or the dictionary. Another student may be helpful in looking up the word.

2. The student enters the word into the section of his dictionary that corresponds to the first letter of the word. In the future when that particular word is needed, the student can look it up in the personal spelling dictionary.

3. Should the student misspell a word on a writing assignment, he or she looks up the correct spelling from spell check on the computer and enters it into the personal spelling dictionary.

4. As a student reads literature or content materials, new words of interest to the student can be recorded in the personal spelling dictionary. These words can later be retrieved for original stories or other writing tasks.

Another recommendation would be to create a class dictionary. Similar to the personal dictionaries, the classroom dictionary would contain words generated by the entire class. Words included may stem from the different content areas or special events throughout the school year. Reference skills are also valuable in helping students to increase spelling proficiency. Such skills include using a published dictionary, electronic spell checkers, accessing human resources or other available reference materials. Teachers can model these strategies to effectively assist students in correcting their misspellings (Angeletti & Peterson, 1993).

Research continually states the importance of students developing spelling consciousness and the desire to spell words from their writing vocabulary correctly. Students need to realize that they are judged by the accuracy of their written work. When misspelling inhibits effective communication, the student's work might be misunderstood as far as the intended message and meaning. "When students write frequently for varied audiences and varied purposes, the importance of spelling as a tool of communication becomes apparent to them" (Griffith, 1996, p. 88). As spelling is linked to writing, spelling consciousness is realized.

To enhance students' spelling the teacher calls attention to spelling during writing demonstrations, shared reading, and editing conferences. Conducting mini-lessons on spelling patterns and hard-to-spell high-frequency words would assist students in spelling development. Spelling should be taught within the context of writing. Spelling improves when students engage in their natural desire to write about topics that are purposeful and important to them. Writing conferences help children improve their spelling. In a final editing conference a teacher must

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point out words that are misspelled with the intention of having the student correctly spell the words now and in future writing endeavors (Manning & Manning, 1994).

Specific spelling activities are especially useful as students become more skilled at being aware of their own spelling. A classroom word wall of high-frequency, hard to spell words can be displayed for student reference during any writing activity. Following shared readings or rhyming passages, the teacher can discuss with students the observed spelling patterns and list those on cards, noting any similarities or differences among them. In another activity, the teacher can ask students to spell a given word, and by the manipulation of colored letter tiles, students will be able to compare and contrast spelling patterns (Gentry, 1998).

As illustrated by the literature, the researchers concluded that students benefit from having more frequent writing activities provided in order to gain experience to increase spelling competency. Of the solutions cited above, the researchers chose to incorporate strategies that combined reading and writing across the curriculum to enhance students' abilities to retain and transfer spelling skills.

Project Objectives and Processes

As a result of requiring students to transfer spelling skills in integrated writing across the curriculum, during the period of January 1999 to June 1999, the first through third graders in the targeted classes will increase their ability to retain and transfer spelling strategies, as measured by teacher-constructed tests and student centered checklists.

In order to accomplish the project objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. Materials that foster spelling transfer across the curriculum will be developed.
2. A series of spelling activities that will encourage retention and transfer in written language.
3. Strategies reflecting these project objectives will be constructed.

Project Action Plan

The researchers will begin their intervention by administering Tool A, which is a student-centered, self-assessment checklist. It is a device that students can use to assess how competent they feel about spelling words. It will provide the teacher with background knowledge of students' perceptions of their ability to spell. This will begin in January of 1999.

The researchers will also begin the use of Tool B, which is a teacher-centered ongoing checklist. It will be used to record a student's transfer of daily spelling practice into written language through independent writing samples. The date will be entered on each line as to when each student has mastered each area. It will be implemented from January of 1999 to March of 1999.

To finalize our baseline data the researchers have developed Tool C, which is a list of high frequency words for the primary grades. This list is to be administered by the teacher as a pretest and a posttest assessment. This list would be given on an individual basis to the selected students and would be used during the months of January and March when intervention is taking place.

The following strategies of the implementation plan will address the issue of improving student transfer of spelling skills across the curriculum. The researchers designed the tools during the fall of 1998 to be utilized by the targeted students. A personal spelling dictionary will be introduced in which students enter high frequency words from their writing and reading into the alphabetical section. In addition a class spelling dictionary will be devised and made available in a central spot in the classroom for high frequency words from content areas.

The researcher will develop and implement strategies to instruct students on grade appropriate high frequency words. Specific daily activities will be used to teach these words. In the first and second grade targeted classrooms, a Word Wall of these words will be displayed.

Spelling rules or generalizations that are consistent with few exceptions will be taught as mini-lessons. Students will work cooperatively in the classroom to create posters illustrating each rule. Posters will include the written rule, one example of how it is used, and a color picture.

The next five components of the implementation plan will address increasing spelling skills and will utilize some parental involvement. The researchers designed the materials over the summer of 1998 to be utilized by the targeted students and their parents.

Each week five high-frequency words will be introduced to the students and sent home. These words will be displayed alphabetically in two areas, one being the actual Word Wall, and the other in a pocket chart which will also contain student-

dictated sample sentences using these words. One day a week students will select one of these sentences to copy and illustrate.

Once each week, individual white and yellow letter squares will be made by the students to construct their words. The white squares represent consonants, and the yellow squares represent vowels. The teacher will orally present a word to the students, and the students will try to spell the word correctly using the given letter squares.

Scrambled sentences centered around each week's words will be cut and glued in the correct order to further develop spelling skills. In this way, students will be given the opportunity to view the words in their proper context.

Poems will be read to the class for the purpose of hearing and seeing spelling patterns in words. Students will need to look for rhyming patterns and be able to sort words according to different spelling patterns.

The next components of the implementation program will describe activities that were developed by the researcher over the fall of 1998 to promote the transfer of spelling skills in authentic writing.

Student writing samples will be collected weekly beginning in January of 1999. The researcher will rank the first writing sample as good, average, or poor based on the student's present spelling ability. It will be used in conjunction with Tool B, a teacher-centered on going checklist. The date will be entered on the appropriate line to indicate when the child has learned each grade level spelling skill. Subsequent writing samples will require students to proofread their work, and select five

misspelled high frequency words to correct before turning it in to the teacher. Corrections are to be based on strategies previously taught in the classroom. Student writing samples will be kept in a portfolio to measure students' spelling growth throughout the intervention.

Students will be instructed to write a questionable word three different ways. They will then select the most visually correct spelling using word sense and spelling patterns introduced in prior mini lessons. Students will be expected to confirm the correct spelling by consulting available resources.

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the effects of the interventions after a four month period, students will be given the same tests that were administered in January 1999. A posttest for the high-frequency words will be given at the end of May 1999. The percentages indicating the number of misspelled words will then be compared. The tests will reflect students' ability both to spell words in isolation and in written form. In addition to comparing the pretest and posttest scores, teachers will be reviewing checklists and writing samples that are kept in a portfolio of everyday writing. Changes in frequency of spelling errors in student writing will be noted in order to determine the effectiveness of the intervention.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The main objective of the project was to increase first through third graders' ability to retain and transfer spelling strategies in integrated writing across the curriculum. This was measured by teacher-constructed tests, student-centered checklists and an analysis of student writing samples. At the beginning of the intervention students were given a pretest of appropriate grade level high-frequency words. In addition, students completed a writing sample which was analyzed to identify students' spelling skills. Further a student-centered self-assessment checklist was administered. This was used as a device to assess how students felt about spelling. It provided the researchers with background knowledge of students' perceptions of their abilities to spell. These tools provided baseline data for the researchers to begin an appropriate intervention.

The following strategies of the implementation plan addressed the issue of improving student transfer of spelling skills across the curriculum. In each of the targeted classrooms, a personal spelling dictionary was utilized. Students entered high-frequency words and alphabetically recorded words that were encountered in writing and reading. A class spelling dictionary was also made

available to record high-frequency words from content areas. Weekly lists of high-frequency words were used to reinforce correct spelling.

Researchers A and B selected five high-frequency words to add to the weekly spelling lists. With the five high-frequency words mini-lessons were taught to introduce strategies for successful mastery of selected words. Mini-lessons focused on the correct use of homophones, word patterns, and the correct use of word irregularities. Students were asked to write the five words in sentences or in a paragraph or story. Students were also asked to write a word triangle for each misspelled word to reinforce correct letter sequencing. As a partner activity the students were instructed to place their five high-frequency words in a letter trail and exchange papers to check and select the hidden word. As a cooperative group activity students worked together to create posters illustrating spelling rules and generalizations that are consistent with few exceptions. Posters included the written rule, an example of how it was used, and a color picture.

Student writing samples were collected weekly and evaluated using the teacher-created writing rubric. Mini-lessons were taught to encourage the use of proofreading skills in writing. Students were asked to select up to five questionable words and write them three different ways. They were then to select the most visually correct spelling using word sense and spelling patterns introduced in prior mini-lessons. Students were asked to confirm the correct spelling by consulting available resources. Another type of writing sample was a letter exchange where students were encouraged to communicate informally and peer edit each other's writing while focusing on weekly spelling strategies.

Researcher C developed and implemented strategies to instruct students on grade appropriate high-frequency words. In the second grade classroom, a Word Wall of these words was created by the teacher and displayed. Each week, five high-frequency words were introduced to the students and sent home for practice. These words were displayed alphabetically by students in two areas, one being the actual Word Wall, and the other in a pocket chart which also contained student-dictated sample sentences using the words. In many instances, several words began with the same letters. One day per week the students selected one of these sentences to copy and illustrate.

The researcher also created an activity called "Making Words." In this activity, the students were given yellow and white squares of paper on which to record letters of the alphabet. Yellow squares represented vowels, and white squares represented consonants. The researcher had previously developed 4X6 yellow and white index cards also containing the letters for the children to copy from and use. The researcher began by placing the scrambled letters of a word at the front of the room. Students copied the letters onto their squares of paper. The researcher then orally presented words to the students, and the students worked to spell each word correctly using their given letter squares. Students were also randomly selected to manipulate the large letters at the front of the room.

Researcher C also developed and implemented an activity called "Scrambled Sentences." In this activity, students were required to identify the correct word order of five scrambled sentences which were centered around that particular week's five

high-frequency Word Wall words. Students cut and glued the words in the correct order on a sheet of paper and sometimes were required to punctuate the sentences correctly. This gave the students the opportunity to view the words in their proper context.

Poems were read to the class by the researcher for the purpose of hearing and seeing spelling patterns in words. Students looked for rhyming patterns and sorted words according to different spelling patterns. Researcher C used poems from a poetry book for children and enlarged them for the class to see. Rhyming word pairs were written on the chalkboard and sorted by spelling patterns.

Student writing samples were collected by the researcher beginning in January 1999. The researcher selected samples from students' authentic writing done in the classroom. The writing samples were ranked as good, average or poor based on the students' spelling abilities. They were used in conjunction with Tool B, a teacher-centered, on going checklist. The students' writing samples were collected and kept in a portfolio to measure students' spelling growth throughout the intervention.

Each week Researchers D and E introduced five high-frequency words to the students on Monday and sent them home with a parent letter for further study. The students were given individual word cards with the words printed in large type for them to keep. The students used markers to outline the configuration of the words and used a highlighter to highlight the vowels in each word. These words were displayed alphabetically in two areas. One area was referred to as The Word Wall and was displayed in the front of the classroom. The other area was a pocket chart also in the

front of the classroom which held the individual words as well as student-dictated sample sentences using these words.

Various activities were conducted by Researchers D and E to assist students in the learning of these high-frequency words. In one activity the students chose an aforementioned dictated sample sentence to print and illustrate. In another activity individual white and yellow letter cards were made by the students to practice constructing the words. The white squares represented consonants and the yellow squares represented vowels. This was a hands-on, manipulative activity in which Researchers D and E orally presented a word to the students, and then the students spelled out the word using the white and yellow letter cards. Other manipulative activities included the use of magnetic letters and also the use of shaving cream to spell out the high-frequency words. Tongue depressors with individual letters printed on them were given to the students, and then the students put them in the correct order to spell the high-frequency words. Still another activity had Researchers D and E make scrambled sentences which were centered around each week's words. These sentences were cut and glued in the correct word order which gave the students the additional benefit of reading the words in their proper context.

Poems were read to the class for the purpose of hearing and seeing spelling patterns in words. A poster of the poem was displayed with individual word cards. Students identified rhyming

patterns and were able to sort words according to different spelling patterns.

A Writing Center was created in the classroom. This was an area where students were encouraged to go to edit their spelling. A class dictionary was made and placed in this center. It contained first and last names of all the students in the class, names of subjects taught in school, names of teachers, and any other words of interest, relevance, and importance generated by the students. Whenever a student finished a piece of writing he/she would select a peer to listen to him/her read the piece out loud. This peer editor also looked at the piece of writing for any spelling errors.

Individual spelling dictionaries for every student further encouraged study of the high-frequency words. The words were listed alphabetically in the dictionary for the students to have in front of them, and each Monday the students highlighted the five specific words for that week. Commonly used words were listed in the dictionary by category such as color words, number words, days of the week, months, etc. In addition, other important words requested by an individual were recorded by Researchers D and E in the individual spelling dictionary.

A great deal of writing practice was given to the students that provided them a means of applying and transferring their knowledge of spelling. Researchers D and E modeled writing in a daily journal which was made available for the students to read. The students also wrote daily in individual journals in which a six point rubric emphasizing correct spelling was used to encourage them to edit their work. Periodically students filled out a self reflection form which helped them evaluate their

spelling progress. Students also wrote seasonal poems, letters to high school pen pals, a Mother's Day booklet, new endings to stories, stories of their own, and letters to Researchers D and E.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to assess the effects of the spelling interventions, the results of the posttests, writing samples, and student-centered checklists were analyzed. The following tables show student performance on the high-frequency posttests, the final writing samples, and how students' attitudes changed toward spelling after the intervention was completed. Following each table is an interpretation and analysis of the results.

Table 1-A
Posttest of High-Frequency Words
Grade Three
May, 1999

High-Frequency Words	Number of Correct Spellings	Number of Misspellings
are	21	0
because	20	1
been	19	2
could	21	0
first	20	1
from	21	0
have	21	0
know	21	0
many	19	2
our	20	1
people	20	1
said	19	2
their	11	10
there	17	4
they	19	2
use	18	3
very	20	1
were	16	5
what	20	1
when	21	0
where	15	6
which	12	9
who	18	3
would	20	1
your	20	1

Table 1-B
Posttest of High-Frequency Words
Grade Three
May, 1999

High-Frequency Words	Number of Correct Spellings	Number of Misspellings
are	21	0
because	19	2
been	18	3
could	20	1
first	19	2
from	21	0
have	21	0
know	21	0
many	20	1
our	19	2
people	17	4
said	19	2
their	18	3
there	19	2
they	19	2
use	19	2
very	19	2
were	21	0
what	21	0
when	20	1
where	20	1
which	20	1
who	20	1
would	20	1
your	20	1

Table 1-A indicates that students as a class correctly spelled 89% of the high frequency words for that grade level when given in isolation. When compared to the pretest given in January, there was an increase of 10%. Table 1-B indicates that students as a class correctly spelled 94% of the high-frequency words for that grade level when given in isolation.

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Table 1-C
Posttest of High-Frequency Words
Grade Two
May, 1999

High-Frequency Words	Number of Correct Spellings	Number of Misspellings
after	26	0
all	26	0
back	24	2
came	26	0
day	25	1
did	26	0
down	24	2
for	26	0
going	26	0
got	26	0
here	24	2
into	26	0
just	22	4
little	19	7
made	25	1
make	26	0
not	26	0
note	25	1
one	26	0
only	22	2
over	25	1
some	25	1
then	24	2
will	25	1
with	26	0

Table 1-C indicates that second grade students as a class were able to spell 96% of the high frequency words correctly for that grade level. When compared to the pretest given in January, a 1% decrease was noted. Since the pretest was not given until January, the high frequency word list seemed very easy for the students. The posttest was given during the end of the school year, and students' minds seemed to be elsewhere. Nevertheless,

this particular group of students' scores remained relatively high on both the pretest and posttest assessments.

Table 1-D
Posttest of High-Frequency Words
Grade One
May, 1999

High-Frequency Words	Number of Correct Spellings	Number of Misspellings
am	18	0
be	17	1
but	17	1
by	18	0
do	18	0
get	17	1
go	18	0
in	18	0
my	18	0
no	15	3
off	17	1
on	18	0
so	17	1
to	15	3
up	18	0
went	17	1
did	18	0
for	18	0
come	18	0
help	14	4
make	18	0
said	8	10
have	18	0
want	14	4
what	9	9

Table 1-E
Posttest of High-Frequency Words
Grade One
May, 1999

High-Frequency Words	Number of Correct Spellings	Number of Misspellings
am	17	3
be	19	1
but	18	2
by	19	1
do	20	0
get	18	2
go	19	1
in	20	0
my	20	0
no	17	3
off	20	0
on	20	0
so	19	1
to	16	4
up	19	1
went	18	2
did	19	1
for	20	0
come	19	1
help	15	5
make	16	4
said	9	11
have	18	2
want	15	5
what	9	11

Tables 1-D and 1-E indicate that students as a class were able to spell the high frequency words correctly for that grade level. In table 1-D, an 11% increase was noted when compared to the pretest given in January. Table 1-E shows a 17% increase when compared to the pretest given in January.

Table 2-A
Student Centered Self-Assessment Checklist May, 1999
"Am I a Good Speller?"

STATEMENTS	A	S	N
I try unknown words.	7	14	0
I try to write the sounds I can hear in a word.	11	7	3
I think about what the words look like.	7	14	0
I try to use other words I know to help me spell words.	8	12	1
I use class lists, books, dictionaries to help me check my spelling.	2	12	7
I try my best when I write and I check my writing to be sure it's my best.	10	9	2
I know how to spell words I use often.	14	7	0
I am learning how to spell some other words I use in my writing.	9	12	0
I ask for help when I can't figure it out by myself.	8	13	0
I know how to use capital letters at the beginning of sentences and for names.	19	2	0
I read a lot.	8	12	1
I write a lot.	11	10	0
I am interested in words.	1	16	4

A = Always S = Sometimes N = Never

Table 2-A showed that of the questions asked, 81% of the students responded always for the survey statement "I know how to spell words I use often." Additionally, 86% of students responded always for the survey statement "I know how to use capital letters at the beginning of sentences and for the names of people and places. Sixty-two percent of the students responded sometimes for the survey statement "I use class lists, books, and dictionaries to help check my spelling." Also, 71% of the students responded sometimes for the survey statement "I ask for help when I can't figure out a word by myself." Finally, 29% of the students

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responded never for the survey statement "I try to write sounds I can hear in a word." The same percentage responded never for the survey statement "I am interested in words." Comparison of the pre and post survey results questions the usefulness of this evaluation tool. The researcher felt that students at this grade level were more apt to answer according to how they thought they should, rather than how they truly felt.

Table 2-B
Student Centered Self-Assessment Checklist May, 1999
"Am I a Good Speller?"

STATEMENTS	A	S	N
I try unknown words.	12	7	2
I try to write the sounds I can hear in a word.	15	6	0
I think about what the words look like.	14	7	0
I try to use other words I know to help me spell words.	10	5	6
I use class lists, books, dictionaries to help me check my spelling.	10	8	3
I try my best when I write and I check my writing to be sure it's my best.	14	7	0
I know how to spell words I use often.	16	5	0
I am learning how to spell some other words I use in my writing.	13	7	1
I ask for help when I can't figure it out by myself.	12	9	0
I know how to use capital letters at the beginning of sentences and for names.	17	4	0
I read a lot.	13	8	0
I write a lot.	15	6	0
I am interested in words.	15	4	2

A = Always S = Sometimes N = Never

Table 2-B showed that of the questions asked, 76% of the students responded always for the survey statement "I to write the sounds I can hear in a word." Additionally, 62% of students responded always for the survey statement "I know how to use capital letters at the beginning of sentences and for the names of people and places." Sixty-two percent of the students responded sometimes for the survey statement "I write a lot." Finally, 29% of the students responded never for the survey statement "I am interested in words." Also, 24% of students

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responded never for the survey statement "I try to use other words I know to help me spell words." The difference in the results of the pre and post surveys is negligible, which again questions the usefulness of the evaluation tool at this grade level.

Table 2-C
Student Centered Self-Assessment Checkist May, 1999
"Am I a Good Speller?"

STATEMENTS	A	S	N
I try unknown words.	10	11	5
I try to write the sounds I can hear in a word.	15	10	1
I think about what the words look like.	16	8	2
I try to use other words I know to help me spell words.	13	9	4
I use class lists, books, dictionaries to help me check my spelling.	11	9	6
I try my best when I write and I check my writing to be sure it's my best.	16	10	0
I know how to spell words I use often.	22	3	1
I am learning how to spell some other words I use in my writing.	15	9	2
I ask for help when I can't figure it out by myself.	15	10	1
I know how to use capital letters at the beginning of sentences and for names.	24	1	1
I read a lot.	19	6	1
I write a lot.	18	8	0
I am interested in words.	14	8	4

A = Always S = Sometimes N = Never

Table 2-C showed that of the questions asked, 85% of the students responded always for the survey statement "I know how to use capital letters at the beginning of sentences and for the names of people and places." Additionally, 62% of the students responded always for the survey statement "I read and write a lot." Fifty-eight percent of the students responded sometimes for the survey statement "I think about what the words look like," and "I ask for help when I can't figure it out by myself." Finally, 35% of the students responded never for the survey statement "I use class lists, books, dictionaries to help

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check my spelling." Also, 31% of students responded never for the survey statement "I am interested in words." Upon examining the pre and post survey results, the researcher concluded that there was not a major difference in the students' responses. This may be attributed to the time of year in which the survey was administered. Students tend to have their interests focused on other areas rather than school work when the end of the school year is so close.

Table 2-D
Student Centered Self-Assessment Checklist May, 1999
"Am I a Good Speller?"

STATEMENTS	A	S	N
I try unknown words.	11	7	1
I try to write the sounds I can hear in a word.	11	7	1
I think about what the words look like.	13	5	1
I try to use other words I know to help me spell words.	12	5	2
I use class lists, books, dictionaries to help me check my spelling.	10	7	2
I try my best when I write and I check my writing to be sure it's my best.	16	3	0
I know how to spell words I use often.	17	2	0
I am learning how to spell some other words I use in my writing.	11	7	1
I ask for help when I can't figure it out by myself.	11	8	0
I know how to use capital letters at the beginning of sentences and for names.	15	3	1
I read a lot.	15	3	1
I write a lot.	16	3	0
I am interested in words.	9	7	3

A = Always S = Sometimes N = Never

Table 2-D showed that of the questions asked, 100% of the students responded always for the survey statement "I know how to use capital letters for names of people and places." Additionally, 78% of students responded always for the survey statement "I try unknown words." Sixty-eight percent of the students responded sometimes for the survey statement "I use class lists, books, and dictionaries to help me check my spelling." Also, 58% of the students responded sometimes for the survey statement "I ask for help when I can't figure out a word by myself." Finally, 32% of the students responded never for the survey statement "I ask

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for help when I can't figure words out by myself." Of the 19 students, 16% responded never for the survey statement "I try to write the sounds I hear in a word." In comparison of the pre and post surveys, the researcher noted that this evaluation tool was not age appropriate for this particular grade level. The students had never taken a survey before and were not used to expressing individual opinions. Many students were not even familiar with what a survey was.

Table 2-E
Student Centered Self-Assessment Checklist May, 1999
"Am I a Good Speller?"

STATEMENTS	A	S	N
I try unknown words.	15	4	1
I try to write the sounds I can hear in a word.	18	2	0
I think about what the words look like.	15	3	2
I try to use other words I know to help me spell words.	16	4	0
I use class lists, books, dictionaries to help me check my spelling.	20	0	0
I try my best when I write and I check my writing to be sure it's my best.	14	5	1
I know how to spell words I use often.	13	7	0
I am learning how to spell some other words I use in my writing.	20	0	0
I ask for help when I can't figure it out by myself.	17	2	1
I know how to use capital letters at the beginning of sentences and for names.	20	0	0
I read a lot.	10	9	1
I write a lot.	13	7	0
I am interested in words.	17	1	2

A = Always S = Sometimes N = Never

Table 2-E showed that of the questions asked 100% of the students responded always for the survey statements "I use class lists, books, dictionaries to help me check my spelling," and "I am learning how to spell some other words I use in my writing." The same percentage of the students responded sometimes for the survey statement "I know how to use capital letters at the beginning of sentences and for names of people and places." which shows a 40% increase from the pretest given in January. Also, 50% of the students responded sometimes for the survey statement "I read a lot."

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Table 3-A
Writing Sample Rubric May, 1999

	Pretest Posttest	Always	Sometimes	Never
Indicates an awareness of "homophones"		38% 52%	48% 43%	14% 5%
Can correctly add the following word endings to all words: y, ing, s, er, est, and ly		57% 57%	29% 43%	14% 0%
Is acquiring skill in changing word forms from singular to plural by adding s, es, or by changing the y to i and adding es		52% 71%	24% 29%	24% 0%
Is developing the ability to change word forms from present tense to past tense by adding d, ed, changing the y to i, and adding ed		71% 67%	19% 33%	10% 0%
Can spell correctly the high frequency words as listed in Table 1-B		43% 71%	43% 29%	14% 0%

Table 3-A indicates that 71% of the class can always spell correctly the high frequency words as listed in Table 1-A. Fifty-two percent indicated that they always had an awareness of "homophones" and 57% correctly added the following word endings to all words: y, ing, s, er, est, and ly at all times. Seventy-one percent of the students were always able to change word

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forms from singular to plural by adding s, es, changing the y to i, and adding es. Sixty-seven percent of the class always showed the ability to change word forms from present tense to past tense by changing the y to i, and adding ed. The increases observed in the data are attributed to the intervention strategy that encouraged writing for authentic purposes. This allowed students to internalize and be responsible for their spelling through self assessment.

Table 3-B
Writing Sample Rubric May, 1999

Pretest
Posttest

	Always	Sometimes	Never
Indicates an awareness of "homophones"	19% 62%	52% 38%	29% 0%
Can correctly add the following word endings to all words: y, ing, s, er, est, and ly	19% 57%	52% 43%	29% 0%
Is acquiring skill in changing word forms from singular to plural by adding s, es, or by changing the y to i and adding es	19% 71%	48% 29%	33% 0%
Is developing the ability to change word forms from present tense to past tense by adding d, ed, changing the y to i, and adding ed	19% 62%	43% 38%	38% 0%
Can spell correctly the high frequency words as listed in Table 1-B	24% 71%	33% 29%	43% 0%

Table 3-B indicates that 23% of the class can always spell correctly the high frequency words as listed in Table 1-B. Nineteen percent indicated they always had an awareness of "homophones" and correctly added the following word endings to all words: y, ing, s, er, est, and ly. The same percentage of the students was always able to change word forms from singular

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to plural by adding s, es, changing y to i, and adding es, and always showed the ability to change word forms from present to past tense. The positive changes noted in the data represent the success of the intervention strategy that encouraged writing for authentic purposes. This empowered students to internalize and be responsible for their spelling through self assessment and editing techniques.

Table 3-C
Writing Sample Rubric May, 1999

Pretest
Posttest

	Always	Sometimes	Never
Can add word endings of y, s, ing, ly, er, ed, and est	35% 54%	46% 31%	24% 15%
Can discern long vowel sounds and use various spelling patterns for those sounds	35% 42%	38% 46%	27% 12%
Indicates learning in the use of contractions	12% 62%	65% 26%	23% 12%
Can spell correctly the grade level high-frequency words as listed in Table 1-C	46% 62%	50% 26%	47% 12%

Table 3-C indicates that only 61% of the second grade students were always able to spell the grade level high-frequency words correctly in a writing sample. In addition, 53% of second grade students were able to add word endings of y, s, ing, ly, er, ed and est all of the time. Of the 26 students, 42% of the class was always able to discern long vowel sounds and use various spelling patterns for those sounds. The class writing sample showed that 61% of the students indicated learning in the use of contractions.

Table 3-D
Writing Sample Rubric May, 1999

	Pretest / Posttest	Always	Sometimes	Never
Can write a one-syllable purely phonetic word correctly	Pretest	70%	5%	25%
	Posttest	95%	5%	0%
Can spell correctly a three or four letter phonetic word using short i, short o, and short a and consonants learned	Pretest	60%	35%	5%
	Posttest	83%	17%	0%
Can spell correctly the grade level high frequency words as listed in Table 1D	Pretest	35%	50%	15%
	Posttest	83%	17%	0%

Table 3-D indicates that 95% of the first grade students were always able to write a one-syllable purely phonetic word correctly in the writing sample. In addition, 83% of these first grade students were able to spell corrrectly a three or four letter phonetic word using short i, short o, and short a and consonants learned. Lastly, the same percentage of the students were able to spell correctly the grade level high frequency words.

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Table 3-E
Writing Sample Rubric May, 1999

Pretest
Posttest

	Always	Sometimes	Never
Can write a one-syllable purely phonetic word correctly	55% 65%	35% 35%	10% 0%
Can spell correctly a three or four letter phonetic word using short i, short o, and short a and consonants learned	45% 45%	50% 50%	5% 5%
Can spell correctly the grade level high frequency words as listed in Table 1E	35% 45%	40% 40%	25% 15%

Table 3-E indicates that 65% of the first grade students were always able to write a one-syllable purely phonetic word correctly in the writing sample. In addition, 45% of these first grade students were able to spell corrrectly a three or four letter phonetic word using short i, short o, and short a and consonants learned. Lastly, 45% of the students were able to spell correctly the grade level high frequency words.

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Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data on the transfer of weekly spelling words into written work, the students showed a substantial increase in both retention and transfer. This increase is proven by the results of the high-frequency pretest and posttest as well as the student writing samples. Further proof was evident in the post writing sample rubrics indicating student transfer of high-frequency words in everyday writing across the curriculum. Students also displayed a positive change in their attitudes toward spelling as indicated in the student-centered checklist. The results of all the above interventions demonstrate that students are taking a proactive stance in being responsible for their own spelling knowledge.

Engaged learning was evident when students were using personal and classroom dictionaries as well as the "Word Wall" for editing techniques. These interventions helped students concentrate on words they wanted to learn how to spell, thus individualizing their own spelling program. Researchers modeled and taught students various reference skills in order to assist them in editing. In addition, students were encouraged to use their spelling dictionaries frequently as a resource to self-correct their writing.

The researchers found the interventions to be successful enough to continue using with some modifications. One modification would be to incorporate to a greater degree the use of the classroom dictionary in conjunction with content areas across the curriculum. While the personal spelling dictionaries were often used by students, at times they interfered with the flow of ideas when writing within the time allotted. Students

became more concerned with the use of the dictionary as opposed to the internalization of the correct spellings. Overemphasis was put on correct spelling rather than creativity and content of writing. Despite these limitations, the use of a personal spelling dictionary offered a sense of ownership to those students and could be used year after year.

Another modification would be to collect fewer writing samples. When more time is allowed between the collection of writing samples, the researchers hypothesize that a more significant student growth in the retention and transfer of spelling skills would be observed.

Also noted was a drawback in the area of data collection. The student-centered self-assessment checklist had limitations that caused the researchers to question the accuracy and validity of the students' responses to the survey statements. After administering the survey, the researchers discovered the format of the survey itself might have caused confusion due to students' unfamiliarity with such a tool. It was also the researchers' opinions that the statements themselves might not have been age appropriate for the students in the targeted grades.

The researchers concluded that the traditional spelling program used in the targeted district would be better served with the addition of supplemental activities and strategies such as those used during the intervention. Emphasizing words that naturally appear in students' writing has been shown by research to be more easily retained and therefore transferred.

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Appendix A

High-Frequency Words Arranged by Grade Level

Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
am	after	are
be	all	because
but	back	been
by	came	could
do	day	first
get	did	from
go	down	have
in	for	know
my	going	many
no	got	our
off	here	people
on	into	said
so	just	their
to	little	there
went	made	they
did	make	use
for	not	very
come	one	were
help	only	what
make	over	when
said	some	where
have	then	which
want	will	who
what	with	would
		your

Am I a Good Speller?

A = Always **S = Sometimes** **N = Never**

_____ I try unknown words.

_____ I try to write the sounds I can hear in a word.

_____ I think about what the words look like.

_____ I try to use other words I know to help me spell words.

_____ I use class lists, books, dictionaries, to help me check my spelling.

_____ I try my best when I write and I check my writing to be sure that I've done my best.

_____ I know how to spell words I use often.

_____ I am learning how to spell some other words I use in my writing.

_____ I ask for help when I can't figure it out by myself.

_____ I know how to use capital letters at the beginning of sentences and for names of people and places.

_____ I read a lot.

_____ I write a lot.

_____ I am interested in words.

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Adapted from "Am I A Good Speller?" assessment checklist. Instructor, August 1996.

	Always	Sometimes	Never
Indicates an awareness of "homophones"			
Can correctly add the following word endings to all words: y, ing, s, er, est, and ly			
Is acquiring skill in changing word forms from singular to plural by adding s, es, or by changing the y to i and adding es			
Is developing the ability to change word forms from present tense to past tense by adding d, ed, changing the y to i, and adding ed			
Can spell correctly the high frequency words as listed in Table 1-B			

	Always	Sometimes	Never
Can add word endings of y, s, ing, ly, er, ed, and est			
Can discern long vowel sounds and use various spelling patterns for those sounds			
Indicates learning in the use of contractions			
Can spell correctly the grade level high-frequency words as listed in Table 1-C			

	Always	Sometimes	Never
Can write a one-syllable purely phonetic word correctly			
Can spell correctly a three or four letter phonetic word using short i, short o, and short a and consonants learned			
Can spell correctly the grade level high frequency words as listed in Table 1D			